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Verification of Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Verification is the confirmation of a student's eligibility for free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Verification is done annually and must include either 1) confirmation of income eligibility or 2) confirmation that the child is included in a certified Food Stamp household or Temporary Assistance unit.

General Requirements

Annually, each Local Education Agency (LEA) must select and verify an exact sample of applications approved for benefits.

The LEA must use either the Standard (error prone) Method or an Alternate sample size method I or II.

The required sample size is based on:

The total number of approved applications on file on October 1 and the non-response rate of the previous school year. The Standard Method must be used by all schools with a non-response rate of 20% or more for the prior school year.

The LEA must complete verification of the exact required sample size by November 15.



Each LEA must complete a verification summary report that is available on November 1 through the Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) web application system by December 15.

Detailed resources such as verification instructions a webinar, and the list of schools required to use the Standard Method can be accessed at DESE FNS's web link: <http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/food-nutrition-services/verification-information> and by contacting the main office at 573.751.3526 for assistance.

Donated Food Program Updates

On behalf of the Donated Food Program, Andy Dudenhoeffer and Josh Winters wish everyone a great school year!

The **2017-2018 USDA Foods Packet and the annual Donated Foods Expo Road Shows** are in the development stages. The packet should be available within the first few weeks of the New Year at: <http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/food-nutrition-services/usda-foods>.

The dates and locations for the Donated Foods Expo Road Shows

are as scheduled:

- Fort Osage School District (Kansas City) – February 15th, 2017
- Waynesville School District (Waynesville) – February 16th, 2017
- Fort Zumwalt School District (St. Louis) – February 17th, 2017

An overview of the program events will be as follows:

- **"Cooking With Commod-**

ities" session lead by Lisa Farmer, Nutrition Program Specialist for the Department of Health & Senior Services.

- An **Overview of the Processing Packet** and
- the **Processor Food Show**.

Registration and additional information will be available soon. See you there!!

Direct Certification of Students

Direct Certification is mandatory in July/August, October and January. It is encouraged to download Direct Certification on a weekly basis. Direct Certification is updated weekly on Monday by noon. DESE, FNS no longer sends weekly reminder emails to download the Direct Certification file. However, reminders will be sent for the mandatory months.

LEAs participating in CEP are required to conduct Direct Certification at least once annually. Missouri requires CEP participants to conduct the Direct Certification process near the beginning of April each year in order to report data reflective of April 1.

An additional option is offered to help ensure eligible students receive all benefits available to them with the Flexibility Notification. LEAs consider the effective date of eligibility for free school meal or milk benefits to be the date listed on the file by the individual student name, rather than the date the LEA accesses the file. This date can be found on the last column of both the MOSIS and ZIP Code Direct Certification file under the header, Match Date. LEAs must notify DESE, FNS if planning to implement this flexibility by filling out the Flexibility Notification: https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/dac_forms/MO5003045.pdf. This form needs to be submitted only one time and will be kept in the State Agency permanent file. If the LEA decides to no longer utilize the flexibility option, the State Agency must be informed of its termination.

In addition to SNAP and TANF eligibility, Foster Children status is indicated on the Direct Certification list. If Foster status is marked with a "Y" in the column then the eligibility status is free. Foster eligibility does not extend free meals to household members. SNAP and TANF does extend eligibility to all household members.

SNAP participation trumps all categories on the Direct Certification list. The reason for the trumping is due to a report DESE, FNS must provide to USDA regarding SNAP participation. This information is captured on the Verification Report. It is very important to report correctly to obtain accurate information. See the below chart reflecting the end result of eligibility status based on trumping:

| SNAP | TANF | FOSTER | ELIGIBILITY |
|------|------|--------|----------------------|
| Y | | | =SNAP, TANF & FOSTER |
| Y | N | | =SNAP & FOSTER |
| Y | | N | =SNAP & TANF |
| Y | N | N | =SNAP ONLY |
| N | Y | | =TANF & FOSTER |
| N | Y | N | =TANF ONLY |
| N | N | Y | =FOSTER ONLY |
| N | N | N | =NONE |

Reminder:

- SNAP trumps all categories
- SNAP and TANF eligibility can be extended to other family members
- Foster status cannot extend eligibility to other family members
- "Y" in any column indicates free meal eligibility
- If the column is blank or "Y" the student is eligible for that status
- Report student in category with "Y" on Verification Report

For further guidance and information regarding Direct Certification go to: <https://dese.mo.gov/forms/MO5003045.pdf>.

Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance by USDA

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A few highlights from USDA Memo SP 57-2016: *Unpaid Meal Charges—Guidance and Q & A* are provided in this article. LEAs are encouraged to seek further information to help stay in compliance with the new mandate requiring LEAs to have a policy in place no later than July 1, 2017, on unpaid meal charges.

Meal Charge Policies

A written policy must be adopted, in effect and communicated clearly to all households. The meal charge policy must be communicated in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to school during the school year. While posting the policy online is helpful, it may not ensure the information reaches all households.

Student Eligibility for Free or Reduced Price Meals

Schools are permitted to eliminate the reduced price category as a strategy to prevent the accrual of unpaid meal charges. LEAs could also choose to lower the cost of reduced price meals below the maximum cost permitted. However, LEAs considering this option are advised to conduct a thorough analysis of their operating costs to ensure they will be able to maintain operations and meal quality without children's payments for reduced price meals.

Payment Options and Payment Reminders

Encouraging families to pre-pay for meals at the reduced price or paid rate is advised. If established, the system must continue to have a method to add funds on the day of service such as cash brought in by a student to pay for meal on the day of service. LEAs may also wish to allow parents and guardians to limit the amount of funds that a student could use daily, particularly for a la carte purchases.

Alternate Meals

Alternate meals to be claimed for reimbursement must meet the meal pattern requirements. LEAs not seeking reimbursement for an alternate meal are not required to ensure those meals meet the meal pattern requirements, however should aim to offer an economical meal that reflects USDA's nutritional goals. With that being said, FNS encourages schools to provide a reimbursable meal to all children who want one and prevents the singling out of children with unpaid meal charges.

Debt Collections

Policies regarding the collection of unpaid meal charges must be included in the written meal charge policy.

- Unpaid meal charges are considered "delinquent debt" when payment is overdue and the debt is considered collectable and efforts are being made to collect. The cost of collection efforts is an allowable use of food service funds.
- Unpaid meal charges are considered "bad debt" when determined that efforts to collect the debt are useless or too costly. The losses must be restored using non federal funds.



Salad Bar Promotional Events 2016-2017!

Missouri Team Nutrition is accepting schools' registrations for the **Salad Bar Promotional and Educational Events** for elementary AND middle/high school sites equipped with salad bars for the 2016-2017 fall and spring semesters!

The very popular **Rainbow Days** event offers \$200 stipend to cover for the special tasting event, plus aprons for staff, beautiful cafeteria posters and roll(s) of stickers for the elementary students.

A first-come, first-serve program, that welcomes repeat schools. Schools can also participate in both the fall and spring, as funds dictate.

In addition, **FreshLife: Enjoy a Salad Today!** is the sister program to the popular **Rainbow Days**. Middle and high schools equipped with salad bars receive a set of four promotional posters, visors for cafeteria staff, salad bar signage and educational materials that can be shared with health and physical education classes.

Participating schools also receive a \$200 stipend to cover for the special tasting event.

Online registrations for **Rainbow Days**, go to <http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/rainbowdayprojects/index.php>

Online registration for the **FreshLife!**, go to <http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/freshlife/index.php>



Incentives for the FreshLife! salad bar events include salad bar signage and visors for staff.

Serving with Success: Online Learning Modules!

Serving with Success is a series of online modules that offer training to assist food service personnel meet their annual professional standards. School food services personnel are highly encouraged to check out the series as on-going training on relevant topics. The series provide training in the following format:

- **Video format** from 5 to 20 minutes in length
- **Variable and relevant topics** from Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to School Lunch and Breakfast Meal Patterns
- **A Quiz** with immediate feedback to enhance understanding
- A downloadable **Certificate of Completion**
- **Continuing Education Units** in 15 minute increments

Learning topics fall under these present categories:

- ⇒ **Meal Access and Reimbursement**

- ⇒ **Special Provisions**
- ⇒ **Nutritional Quality and Meal Pattern**
- ⇒ **Resource Management**
- ⇒ **General Program Compliance**
- ⇒ **Other Federal Programs**
- ⇒ **Administrative Review**

Individual learning modules are being added according to new USDA mandates and educational needs of LEAs. Schools are encouraged to take a look at what is available for their staff at <http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/food-nutrition-services/serving-success>.



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

**MSNA 2016 Annual Conference
November 4-6, 2016**

**Stoney Creek Hotel & Convention Center
Independence, MO**

For registration and schedule at-a-glance, go to
www.mosna.org

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